Comparability, Cognition, and Cultural Recreation:
A Theoretical Reading of the Translation of Pahari Riddles

Meenakshi F. Paul* and Vishal Rangta**

Abstract

The act of translation transcends linguistic substitution to embrace cultural exchange and cognitive adaptation. This paper explores the translation of Pahari riddles collected through fieldwork in Shimla District, Himachal Pradesh, to examine the balance between equivalence and synthesis in translation. Riddles, as oral traditions, pose unique challenges due to their intrinsic duality, serving as both linguistic constructs and cultural artefacts. While traditional translation theories emphasise adequacy and equivalence, this study advocates for the latter, nuanced approach that foregrounds cultural embeddedness and integrates domestication and foreignization, which enables accessibility without overly compromising the source. Going beyond the equivalence analytical framework, this paper evaluates translation strategies in terms of their ability to maintain or adapt semantic, structural, and cultural elements while preserving the identity of culturally-rooted oral texts. A limitation of the study is the small sample size, which, although rich in complexity, may not comprehensively reflect the region's diverse riddle traditions. Key findings highlight that riddles inherently resist direct equivalence due to their reliance on cultural allusions and linguistic creativity. Consequently, effective translation requires a synthesis of strategies that maintain intelligibility while respecting the nuances of the source culture. The study emphasises that the structural nature of riddles defies standardised methods, necessitating a flexible, context-sensitive approach. The breaching of the equivalence framework offers critical insights into this adaptive process, underlining the need to balance faithfulness to the source with relevance to the target audience. Ultimately, this work underscores the broader significance of translating oral traditions, advocating for a dynamic model in which riddles transform, not just transfer.

Keywords: Riddle, Cognitive adaptation, Equivalence, Synthesis, Cultural artefacts, Domestication, Foreignization

Introduction

Translation is not merely a linguistic activity but a complex act of interaction between cultures, modes of thought, and forms of expression. This is especially evident in the translation of oral literature, where the assimilation of language, performance, and socio-cultural context poses significant challenges to conventional strategies. The riddles in the Pahari dialect of the Shimla District serve as prime examples of oral texts that resist straightforward translation. Their form, function, and linguistic nuances are deeply rooted in local culture, prompting a deeper investigation into how meaning travels across languages and cultural boundaries.

This study employs a flexible strategy guided by translation theories of Eugene Nida's dynamic equivalence and Lawrence Venuti's concepts of domestication and foreignization; it is further informed by Sri Aurobindo's concept of cognition in translation and Rabindranath Tagore's idea of re-creation or transcreation. While Nida emphasises the receptor's response, Venuti highlights the translator's ethical responsibility to retain the "foreignness" of the source text (74). Domestication may risk erasing cultural distinctions, while foreignization maintains cultural markers that challenge and educate the reader.

Eugene Nida distinguishes two types of equivalences: formal and dynamic. Formal equivalence emphasises

* Professor, Department of English, HPU Department of Evening Studies, The Mall, Shimla, HP-171001. Can be reached at mfpaul.simla@gmail.com

** Assistant Professor of English, CoE, Govt. College Sanjauli, Shimla, HP-171001, Can be reached at ivishallwel@gmail.com

preserving both structure and meaning, akin to gloss translation, to help readers understand the context of the original language. In this method of translation, the source text is translated word-for-word into the target language, maintaining the original structure and order of words. This approach is often used for linguistic analysis or educational purposes, as it helps to preserve the grammatical and syntactical features of the source language. However, gloss translation may not produce a fluent or natural-sounding result in the target language, as its primary goal is to provide a literal representation rather than a meaning-rich or idiomatic one. This paper follows formal equivalence in its second step, where individual words of the source language text, Pahari, are translated into the target language text, English, though it neither captures the structure nor the meaning of the riddle in the original or receptor language. In contrast, dynamic equivalence, which Nida later renamed functional equivalence, focuses on producing the same impact on the new audience as the original did for its readers (Nida and Taber 12). It prioritises effect over form, making the message more natural and accessible. Formal equivalence has been borne in mind in the reconstruction of the Pahari riddles in English translations.

While foundational, Nida's theory has been critiqued for relying overly on the target audience's subjective response, risking loss of stylistic and cultural nuance (Mao and Wang 187). Moreover, focusing too much on making the text amenable to comprehension in the target language can weaken its cultural, historical, or literary accuracy, consequently reducing the depth of its cultural meaning, unique style, and connection to its original context. Literalists also argue that functionalist equivalence leans too far from the original, undermining accuracy. In translating Pahari riddles, strict formal equivalence often diminishes rhetorical impact, whereas trying to equate meanings in both languages can remove important cultural details and make the text emaciated. These and other issues reveal the imperative need for a balanced approach, which this study terms "Comparability, Cognition, and Cultural Recreation." This is a hybrid strategy with a multi-pronged approach integrating both forms of equivalence, blending fidelity to source and intelligibility for the reader, combining a judicious mix of domestication and foreignization, cognitive apprehension and adaptation, and cultural recreation and synthesis.

Three-Step Translation Process of Riddles

The riddles used in this study were collected through ethnographic fieldwork, including informal interviews and participatory observation. They cover themes such as agriculture, animals, folk beliefs, and other aspects of local culture. Each riddle acts as a linguistic puzzle and a cultural artefact, with meaning rooted in metaphor, shared knowledge, and regional symbolism. An account of the collected riddles, followed by translation and a theoretical analysis of the translation process, is given below. The analysis highlights how each riddle moves through the three-step process—transcription, gloss, and recreation—and how it engages with diverse translation theories.

Riddles and English Translations

1. | *Śāparī* | *śan* | *ḍābarī* | *ḍan,* | *biatī* | *dā* |
   |---|---|---|---|---|---|
   | Rock | warm | pool | lives, | wall | in |
   | *cōr* | *svargā* | *mōr.* | | | |
   | thief | heaven | peacock. | | | |

Who lives on the warm rock, who lives in the pool, who's the thief in the wall, who's heaven's peacock?

Answer: *Gōṛ* (Lizard), *Miṁḍkā* (Frog), *Muśā* (Mouse), and Indra Dev (Lord Indra).

This riddle exemplifies an effective application of foreignization and dynamic equivalence. The translation preserves the metaphorical complexity and sequence of clues, offering the target reader the same playful interpretive challenge as the source audience. The use of poetic structure and repetition reflects a recreation strategy in Tagore's sense, prioritising cognitive resonance over direct equivalence as advocated by Sri Aurobindo. The inclusion of "heaven's peacock" to reference Indra Deva maintains the mystique and culturally rooted symbolism without overt explanation, aligning with Venuti's call for visible foreignness. The structural and symbolic logic of the original is retained substantially by achieving functional equivalence. At the same time, emphasis is laid on the layered identities of creatures across different settings.

2. | *Ār* | *chalākā* | *pār* | *chalākā,* | *bic* |
   |---|---|---|---|---|
   | Here | splashes | their | splash, | middle |
   | *nāḷiyē* | *zāmṭū* | *pākā.* | | |
   | of the stream | rough lemon | ripe. | | |

Here a splash, there a splash, a rough lemon ripens in the middle of the stream.

Answer: *Makkhaṇ* (Churned butter).

This riddle presents a challenge in its cultural metaphor, as the image of "rough lemon" (*zāmṭū*) as a metaphor for *makkhaṇ* (churned butter) is not self-evident in English.

The translation retains the original imagery through foreignization and avoids domesticating the metaphor; however, there is a noticeable loss of rhythm in the second part of the translation. The interpretive burden is passed on to the reader, which reflects Aurobindo's cognitive model, emphasising reader participation in reconstructing meaning (Gupta and Deo 118). While the term "*zāmṭū*," for "rough lemon," might seem obscure, it aligns with the original's puzzling effect, thus achieving dynamic equivalence through experience rather than straightforward clarity. This translation resists over-explanation while preserving the folk logic and cognitive process embedded in the riddle.

3.	*Ṭēḍī-mēḍī*	*lakaṛī,*	*bicau*	*dā*	*bhaurā*	*ras,*
	Twisted	wood,	middle	in	fill	juice,
	jē	*nā*	*būjhī*	*mērī*	*bajhainī,*	*rūpayē*
	if	no	solve	my	riddle,	rupee
	lāgō	*das.*				
	cost	ten.				

A twisted stick, filled with juice, it'll cost you ten rupees if you don't solve my clues.

Answer: *Jalēbī* (Jalebi).

This translation attempts to maintain the playful structure and rhyme of the original. "Juice" suggests a syrupy core, leading to the answer, *jalebi*. The monetary threat and the possibility of a *jalebi* treat with the penalty adds performative flair, invoking the element of folk performance in orality. The theoretical framework of this riddle merges dynamic equivalence or audience impact with transcreation or recreating experience. It also reflects Sri Aurobindo's 'truth-experience' by keeping the symbolic weight intact. The English translation of the riddle is adequate in performance terms, although literalists may feel the cultural reference is still veiled. That ambiguity, however, may be viewed as integral to the logic of the riddle form.

4.	*Pārau*	*dā*	*āī*	*kāī*	*kutī,*	*tērē*
	Far	from	come	black	bitch,	your
	bā	*hāgā*	*gōī*	*sūtī.*		
	father	in front of	has	sleep.		

A black bitch came from afar and went to sleep before your pa.

Answer: *Dāṛī-Mūṁch* (Beard and moustache).

This riddle is rich in metaphor and ambiguity. The translated version preserves the provocative tone and animal imagery, crucial to the playfulness and shock value of the original. The cognitive dissonance evoked by the description invites interpretive delay, which is central to the riddle tradition. Here, Tagore's concept of recreation is most visible: the riddle is not tamed or softened for the sake of clarity but retains its poetic mischief and suggestive surface. The decision to translate *kāī kutī* literally as "black bitch" employs a foreignising strategy and avoids euphemism. It also fulfils Nida's functional equivalence, as the emotional and humorous effect is preserved, even if the precise cultural coding may vary across contexts.

5.	*Aurī*	*bhī*	*ūṁ*	*bhaurī*	*bhī*	*ūṁ,*
	Green	is also	full	also	am,	middle
	bic	*khētau*	*dē*	*khauṛī*	*bhī*	*ūṁ.*
	field	in	the	stand	also	am.

I am green, I am also full, and I stand in the field as well.

Answer: *Makkī* (Maize).

This riddle operates on a self-referential level and builds a metaphor grounded in agriculture. The translation adopts a literal but poetic strategy, maintaining the simplicity and declarative form of the original. This reflects dynamic equivalence in structure and tone, giving the target reader the same intuitive clues without excessive annotation. However, because "maize" may or may not carry the same centrality in Western cultural imagination as in Pahari contexts, the translation leans on cognitive equivalence, relying on the reader's reasoning to match qualities described to a known object (Ferreira and Schwieter 35). It walks a line between formal structure and reader-oriented effect, offering an adequate interpretive equivalent.

6.	*Ḍābē*	*pāṁdai,*	*ḍābā*	*ḍābē*	*rā*	*gāṁv,*
	Box	upon	box,	box	of	village,
	cāldī-phirdī	*bastī*	*lōē*	*rā*	*pāṁv.*	
	move	village	iron	of	foot.	

Box upon box, boxes make a village, with feet of iron, a moving village.

Answer: *Rēlgāṛī* (Train).

Here, the image of a train is retained in its source form. This is a classic foreignising strategy (Venuti) and an act of transcreation (Tagore). It challenges the target reader to inhabit the source world's metaphor. The riddle is highly effective as it preserves both cognitive dissonance and cultural specificity, allowing the reader to "solve" the metaphor as one would in the original setting.

Another variant of the same riddle is used in this part of Himachal Pradesh in a completely different form. It substitutes the image of a village personified as a giant with iron feet with a more explicit chaotic image of a railway station when a train is about to leave. The changed evocative version is as follows:

Aurā	*ḍābā*	*lāl ḍābā*	*ḍābā*	*ō*	*sarkārī,*
The green	box	and red	box	are	of the government,

baiṭhṇī	*rī*	*dumdām*	*cālaṇī rī*	*taiyārī.*
sit	for	clamour,	go for	ready.

Green box, red box, box of the government, a clamour to climb on, ready to set out.

Although the rhythm is broken in this rendering into English, nevertheless, it nevertheless maintains the excitement and impact of its earlier variant.

7.	*Tīrī*	*rī*	*āū*	*magīrī*	*rī*	*āū,*
	Vent hole	from	come	vent hole	from	come,

	ḍāg	*nī*	*ausu*	*māchau*	*khāū.*
	daag (witch-like entity)	no	is man	eat.	

I come from a vent hole, from yet another vent hole, a *ḍaag* I may not be, but men I eat.
Answer: *Danāḷī* (Double-barrelled gun).

The image of a gun turning into a monster that creeps in through a vent hole is notably preserved in the translation, without explicitly naming it. This transformation aligns well with foreignization, functional equivalence, which captures the same psychological tension, and cognitive adaptation, allowing the reader to actively piece together the intended meaning. As proposed by Ferreira and Schwieter, the translators here play the role of cognitive interpreters (35), helping reconstruct layers of meaning. Although there is a loss of rhythm in English, the approach works sufficiently, especially in preserving the tone, depth of the metaphor, and imaginative logic, hopefully allowing it to resonate effectively with the reader.

8.	*Uṛkaṇu-śuṛkaṇu*	*cārē*	*cakāṇ, pīṭhī*	*dī auṛkanī kaiṛī*
	Fly four	legs,	back at the elbow,	back of the neck

	dē	*kān.*
	on	ear.

It flies and rests on all four legs, its elbows point back, and it has ears on its neck.

Answer: *Thaḍā* (Grasshopper).

This riddle is intensely visual, relying on descriptive anatomy to deceive and amuse. The translation attempts to render these features, sustaining the dynamic energy and observational tone of the Pahari riddle. The onomatopoeic verbs *uṛkaṇu-śuṛkaṇu* are, however, approximated by "flies and rests," a poetic compromise that deviates from the original rhythm without literal replication. This compromise is typical of transcreation, which maintains functional and stylistic equivalence rather than phonological fidelity. The anatomical inversion, elbows pointing back, and ears on the neck invite cognitive decoding, aligning with Sri Aurobindo's notion of recreating inner experience. The translation captures the riddle's absurd anatomical logic, its humour and strangeness, enhancing its poetic and mnemonic appeal. This riddle appears in another variant with a minor difference, where the initial two words are replaced by '*acakaṇ-macakaṇ*' and '*auṛkanī*' is substituted by '*auṛkan*,' which further contributes to the linguistic diversity of the region of the study.

9.	*Māṭhō*	*jō*	*guganu,*	*bauṛō*	*jō*	*pēṭ,*
	Little	is	the oil lamp,	big	is	the stomach,

	cāl	*mērō*	*guganu*	*Maṁḍī-Skēt.*
	come	my	oil lamp	the erstwhile princely states of Mandi and Suket.

Little is the oil lamp, its belly is great, let's go with my oil lamp to Mandi-Suket.

Answer: *Dhūṁ* (Smoke).

The translation of this riddle invites an interpretive approach through dynamic equivalence, as proposed by Eugene Nida. The metaphor of a small oil lamp producing abundant smoke that travels to the distant lands of "Mandi-Suket" foregrounds a cultural image that cannot be understood literally outside its source context. Dynamic equivalence allows for the preservation of the intended communicative effect by retaining the poetic exaggeration and symbolic spatial reference. Lawrence Venuti's theory of foreignization is particularly relevant here, as terms like "Mandi-Suket" cannot be domesticated or replaced with familiar referents from the target culture; rather, they maintain the cultural embeddedness of the riddle. This visible cultural marker validates Venuti's emphasis on resisting domestication in

translation. The poetic translation maintains the rhythm and surprise of the original, emphasising transcreation to recreate mood and imagery.

10.	*Ūpar*	*bēl,*	*buīṁ*	*thāvāṁ,*	*āmā*
	Up	creeper,	below	ground,	mother
	gōrī,	*put*	*śāvāṁ.*		
	fair,	son	dark.		

Vine above, ground below, mother fair, son dark.

Answer: *Magō* (obscure, unverified name) or *Daregal* (probable name; Air Yam).

This riddle is visually simple but metaphorically rich, employing natural imagery to convey a relationship between the visible creeper and the hidden root tuber. Nida's formal equivalence can be maintained to an extent, since the structure and surface meaning are accessible cross-culturally. However, dynamic equivalence becomes essential to highlight the metaphorical role of the mother and son, where the mother is the creeper and the son is the dark tuber root growing deep inside the soil. The translation resists domestication in Venuti's sense, leaving the metaphoric structure intact. It does not substitute the image with more familiar flora; rather, it foreignises the reader's experience, maintaining the cultural origin of the imagery. Sri Aurobindo's cognitive theory is evoked in the symbolic association between visibility and identity; what is seen is not necessarily the origin. Tagore's notion of transcreation supports the translation of the metaphor in a poetic mode, emphasising the philosophical and emotional layers embedded in a seemingly simple description of a plant.

This riddle was encountered in the Junga Tehsil, but arguably, the dialect in which it is rendered is not the dialect of the area, which suggests that this riddle has migrated to the region, probably by way of either marriage or through trade and travel. The words such as *"buīṁ," "thāvāṁ," "āmā," "put,"* and *"śāvāṁ"* resemble the Kehluri dialect spoken mainly in Bilaspur District and some parts of Solan District of Himachal Pradesh, suggesting that the riddle might have travelled to Junga Tehsil of Shimla District. The ambiguity of the riddle also translates to its answer, which is equally uncertain. The informant provided the answer to the riddle as *"magō"*, whereas further investigation yielded a blank, and the name was not found anywhere else. The description of *magō* vegetable provided by the informant was cross-checked with multiple informants from Solan and Bilaspur Districts, and it was revealed that the description resembles *daregal* (air yam), and to an extent,

taradi (Himalayan yam). The word *magō*, however, was not found among the speakers in the region.

11.	*Pōrau*	*āē*	*ḍiṁgaḷī*	*ḍauṁṭhī,*
	From there	comes	stick	thick,
	mauṁyai	*zāṇō*	*ziṁdaṛī*	*nauṭhī.*
	I	know	life	run away.

From there, a thick stick came my way, and I knew my life would run away.

Answer: *Sāṁp* (Snake).

The riddle's sudden shift from a seemingly ordinary image, a stick, to a life-threatening recognition of a snake is made possible through direct translation, which allows the translator to prioritise the effect of fear, urgency, and recognition. The metaphor of a "thick stick" triggers cognitive shock, and does not diminish the riddle's tension; instead, foreignization preserves its suspense and ambiguity. From a cognitive perspective, the riddle captures a moment of instinctive realisation, the transformation of perception that sparks an intuitive reaction to evoke the same sudden jolt of comprehension and fear. The metaphor maintains the poetic surprise and logic inherent in the original.

12.	*Battī*	*kuṭṭaṇ*	*kuṭadai*	*lāgai,*	*piṁgalā*
	Thirty-two	pounder	pound	start,	pink
	rāṇī	*nācadē*	*lāgī,*	*bhubar*	*miyāṁ*
	queen	dance	start,	mouth,	mister
	guṭadā	*lāgā.*			
	swallow	start.			

Thirty-two Pounders began to pound, Pink Queen began to dance, and Mister Mouth began to swallow.

Answer: *Rōṭī khāṇī* (Eating) involving *Dāṁd* (Teeth), *Zīb* (Tongue), *Mūṁh* (Mouth).

This riddle exemplifies a highly metaphorical mode of expression, representing the process of eating through personified imagery. Nida's dynamic equivalence is crucial to conveying the poetic and bodily metaphors; the thirty-two pounders signify teeth, the pink queen is the tongue, and the mouth becomes a theatrical stage. The original Pahari terms are rich in connotation, and it is important to retain their flavour, particularly the regal metaphor for the tongue, as taste rules the function of eating. The translation avoids domestication, preserving the metaphorical logic while relying on the reader to make conceptual links. Tagore's idea of transcreation is

indispensable in translating this riddle to maintain its colour, rhythm, and dramatic spirit. The translator must become a performer, mirroring the playful narrative that unfolds in the riddle's sequence.

13.

Ārau	*bhī*	*dhār*	*pārau* *bhī*	*dhār, bic*	*nāī*
This side	also	hill	that side hill,	middle river	in

dū bēṛau	*rō*	*ṭhāc.*
sheep	of	highland pasture.

Hills to this side, hills to that side, in the middle of the river, there are sheep in the pasture.

Answer: *Sīṛē* (Also known as *siddu* in other tehsils).

This riddle employs geographical imagery to depict a local dish, *sīṛē* (or *siddu*), and the traditional method of cooking it. *Sīṛē* are made of fermented wheat flour and stuffed with lentils. They are steamed and served with ghee and chutney. Metaphorically likened to a mountainscape, *sīṛē* are described thus: the sides of the steaming vessel are the hills surrounding the valley, water for steaming is the river, the blades of grass and leaves placed on the water represent the pasture, and the *sīṛē* placed on it are the sheep. Cognitively, the riddle represents food through visual-spatial metaphors, echoing Aurobindo's idea of perception as symbolic cognition. *Siddu*, as a microcosm of the Himachali landscape, offers readers a cultural and sensory bridge into local life, which carries significant regional culinary value. Foreignisation here does not lead to cultural loss as the geographic-food metaphor unique to the region is not erased in the translated riddle. The metaphor's elegance balances food, geography, and poetic insight.

This riddle is also found in the Junga Tehsil with minor differences. The words *ārau, pārau*, and *dhār* are replaced by *āṁḍkū, pāṁḍkū*, and *ḍhāk,* respectively:

Āṁḍkū ḍhāk pāṁḍkū ḍhāk, bic nāḷiyē bhēḍrū ṭhāc.

14.

Khāṭū	*kacaumbalū*	*kauṛū*	*kaśbāī,*	*tūai*
Sour,	pungent,	bitter,	astringent,	you,

kyō	*jhāṁgū āṁ*	*rājai*	*rū*	*sipāhī?*
why	attack me,	king	of	soldier?

Thiskē	*nākai*	*pacauūlē*	*mumhai*	*mumai*
Snub	nose	sunken	face,	I

kyā	*zāṇuai*	*ki*	*ai*	*tiyā*
how	know	that	here	was

tūai?
you?

You are sour, pungent, bitter, and astringent. why did you attack me? I am the king's soldier.

You have a snub nose and a sunken face. how was I to know that you were here?

Answer: *Āṛū* (Peach) and *Miṁḍkā* (Frog).

This riddle is a miniature folk drama, structured around a dialogic exchange between two characters—a frog and a peach. The translation here draws heavily on Tagore's concept of transcreation, as it seeks not merely to transfer meaning but to reanimate the emotional and performative life of the riddle in the target language. Rather than making the exchange dull and converting it into explanatory prose, the translation preserves the voice, tone, and conflict embedded in the original. The emotional vibrancy of the frog's grievance and the peach's defence is retained through dynamic equivalence by the deliberate use of colloquial expressions and pacing, offering the reader an experience akin to that of a native listener. The effect on the target audience approximates that of the source audience through an analogous experiential character. Terms like "sour, bitter, and astringent" evoke a sensory profile familiar to Indian palates. Likewise, the mention of "the king's soldier" allows the folk register and social imagination of the source culture to remain visible. The translation reflects a cognitive equivalence approach, encouraging the reader to reconstruct meaning from embedded metaphors, local references, and the dramatic turn of events. The translation moves between fidelity and creativity, using functional equivalence to preserve the dramatic liveliness and cultural nuance of this animated folk encounter.

Conclusion

The riddles discussed above have been transcribed using the Roman Script with ISO 15919 diacritics to maintain phonetic integrity. This marks the first layer of translation—capturing sound to preserve the oral identity of the riddles. It is not just phonological fidelity but cultural encoding, as argued by Nida in his paper titled "Principles of Correspondence," in which he emphasised that form and content are inseparable in a message (156).

The second step involved a word-for-word gloss into English. For example, *"lāl ḍābā"* becomes "red box" and *"cāldī-phirdī bastī"* becomes "moving village." This step helps preserve the semantic structure, but it is often not

so satisfactory and is insufficient on its own, as it fails to capture and interpret the local meaning of the Pahari riddle. As A. K. Ramanujan suggests, the literal often fails to account for embedded cultural meanings and poetic resonance (qtd. in Dharwadker 296).

In the final stage, the riddles are creatively rearticulated in English while respecting their rhythmic and metaphorical logic. Nida's theory of functional equivalence is crucial here, as the process of translating was also done for effect and not merely for form. However, the riddles resist any singular equivalence. For instance, the metaphor of a *"ḍāg"* (a kind of human-eating witch) loses poetic charm and cultural resonance if replaced by its English equivalent, "witch." The word *ḍāg* also forms the implicit referent and leads to the answer of the riddle. Here, Venuti's foreignization serves as a corrective by encouraging retention of such imagery to foreground cultural specificity (Venuti 75). In this stage, the riddles are rewritten in idiomatic, evocative English to retain the riddle-ness of the riddles by foregrounding brevity, rhythm, ambiguity, and play.

The act of translating thus becomes dialogic. As Sri Aurobindo argued, language is an expression of consciousness, and translation must preserve the "truth-experience" of the "original." This aligns with Tagore's idea of transcreation—an intuitive recreation that values resonance over replication. If a riddle refers to *"bichubuti"* (stinging nettle), its English rendering should evoke not just the plant but its cultural function as a common folk remedy or disciplinary tool. The translator is not just a conveyor of meaning but an interpreter who reconstructs it for the target audience. This model validates a "performative" translation, where riddles are not merely encoded in a new language but reborn through cultural and cognitive adaptation.

The translation of Pahari riddles through the framework of comparability, cognition, and cultural recreation demonstrates a well-balanced and theoretically informed process. At the phonetic level, the use of standard diacritics for Roman transcription ensures strong fidelity to the original sounds, preserving the oral-aural rhythm and local identity of the riddles. The semantic clarity achieved in the word-for-word gloss stage is analytically sound, offering foundational insight into the literal structure of the riddles; however, this stage alone does not capture the performative or poetic dimension essential to the riddle tradition. The poetic recreation stage compensates for this by effectively preserving cultural embeddedness through metaphor, rhythm, and symbolic imagery, key traits that align with Venuti's advocacy for foreignization and Tagore's idea of emotional resonance over literal fidelity. The poetic impact in English, then, mirrors the cognitive and emotional effect intended in the original

Pahari, fulfilling Nida's dynamic equivalence through reader engagement and interpretive intrigue.

Importantly, the translator's interpretive agency is made visible, a conscious departure from the traditional invisibility of the translator. This visibility not only validates Venuti's ethical model but also underscores the translator's role as a cultural mediator. The translation approach invites the reader to engage in active meaning-making, a practice that reflects both Aurobindo's cognitive orientation and Ferreira and Schwieter's model of the translator as an interpreter of culturally-situated cognition. In balancing fidelity to the original text with accessibility for the target audience, the approach avoids over-domestication while remaining intelligible. Overall, this hybrid strategy proves adaptive, context-sensitive, and ethically grounded, reflecting a nuanced engagement with multiple translation theories while remaining responsive to the unique structural and cultural demands of riddles.

The translation of Pahari riddles reflects a nuanced practice that goes beyond traditional notions of equivalence, engaging multiple theoretical perspectives to navigate the complexity of culturally embedded oral texts. Rather than aiming for replication, the process produces a transformed version that captures the essence, tone, and imaginative spirit of the original. By moving between formal accuracy and dynamic resonance, and by carefully negotiating between foreignization and transcreation, the translator enables the riddles to resonate meaningfully within a new linguistic and cultural context. Though the study draws on a limited yet rich selection of riddles, it offers valuable insights into the challenges of translating oral literature. The inherent tension between linguistic precision and cultural integrity calls for an approach that is both adaptive and interpretive. The hybrid framework thus affirms that effective translation is less about rigid adherence to models and more about responsive engagement shaped by the demands of the text, the expectations of the audience, and the translator's creative judgement.

References

Bassnett, Susan. *Translation Studies*. Routledge, 2002.

Dharwadker, Vinay. "A. K. Ramanujan's Theory and Practice of Translation." *Postcolonial Translation: Theory and Practice*, edited by Susan Bassnett and Harish Trivedi, Routledge, 1999, pp. 114–140.

Ferreira, Aline, and John W. Schwieter, editors. *The Handbook of Translation and Cognition*. Wiley-Blackwell, 2017.

Gao, Yinli. "Analysis of Eugene Nida's Translation Theory." *International Journal of Education and Humanities*, vol. 10, no. 1, 2023, pp. 203–205.

Górniak, Justyna. "Principles of Correspondence." *The Translation Studies Reader*, edited by Lawrence Venuti, Routledge, 2000.

Gupta Aggarwal, Monika, and S. S. Deo. "Theory and Practice of Translation." *Indian Scholar: An International Multidisciplinary Research e-Journal*, vol. 3, no. 1, Sep. 2016, pp. 116–119.

Mao, Dan, and Zhilin Wang. "A Study of Eugene A. Nida and His Translation Theories." *Lecture Notes on Language and Literature*, vol. 7, no. 3, 2024, pp. 181–187.

Nida, Eugene A., and Charles R. Taber. *The Theory and Practice of Translation*. Brill, 1969.

Nida, Eugene A. "Principles of Correspondence." *The Translation Studies Reader*, edited by Lawrence Venuti, Routledge, 2000, pp. 126–140.

Venuti, Lawrence. "Translation, Empiricism, Ethics." *Profession*, 2010, pp. 72–81. *JSTOR*.